

THE ESSENTIAL BOND “PLAY PAYS HOMAGE TO A GREAT LOVE”

In addition to supporting the “Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century” exhibition, the Los Angeles youth created and produced a play about the life of Linus Pauling. The following article provides background on the play as well as some actors’ impressions.

The Essential Bond endeavors to unite the life and work of Linus Pauling with the remarkable love story between Pauling and his wife, Ava Miller. Dr. Linus Pauling undoubtedly defines a scientific era; he holds the distinction of being the only individual in history to receive two unshared Nobel prizes, in 1954 for chemistry and again in 1962 for peace. There is no doubt that Pauling’s wife, Ava Miller, defined Pauling’s life, love and compassion for the human condition.

Ava’s profound conviction in humanity’s value creating potential infused her husband’s otherwise wholly scientific passions into a concerted effort to better the lot of humanity. *The Essential Bond* spans the history of the Pauling’s relationship in a blend of precisely constructed multi-media vignettes to maximum effect. Performed by an accomplished ensemble of young actors, and written and directed by Shan Serafin and produced by Cory Taylor, the play spans Pauling’s more than forty-year career. It begins with his meeting the intelligent and vivacious Ava Miller as a young professor and deftly covering all the major milestones in the Pauling’s life. The play’s strength lies in its ability to remain faithful to the spirit of the Pauling’s relationship. Showing that a great relationship has the foundation of trust, mutual respect and perseverance at its core.

The actors, who have been immersed in the biographical details of this unique partnership, shared some of their impressions and experiences of working on the production.

Q: How has participation in this play changed your views on the meaning of world peace?

Matthew N. Ashford (who plays Dr. Linus Pauling)

Matt: My looking into Linus Pauling’s life for this role has given me a new respect for the peace movement.

I realize that it’s something I had virtually taken for granted because from the time I was born it was already in place...in the midst of perfectly horrible things there were people willing to stand up and take decisive action.

I realize that my efforts on a daily basis will make a difference. Justice takes place on many different levels. For instance in a friendship—sometimes it’s not easy to stand up but there’s the potential to deepen the relationship.

It’s important to look for good examples around us to help us do that.

Q: What is the biggest lesson you’ve learned from the story of Ava and Linus?

Julie Ann Taylor (as Ava Pauling)

Julie: Playing a great woman, and trying to make it a personal challenge to embody her characteristics in my own daily life...but also trying to become this kind of woman in my own life—expanding my own life to care like Ava—that’s what [SGI President Ikeda] is talking about.

Ava Pauling was never elitist, never hung up on formality. I heard a wonderful story about the Paulings. They had planned a dinner party with some very important guests; Ava memorized the names of 100 dinner guests rather than make distinctions with seating arrangement cards....

Q: What has been the most enjoyable aspect of working on the play?

Julie: Meeting new people. The creative process. Finding everything there is to discover with these characters together [with the cast].

Ava's views in terms of justice and upholding the values of world peace are very inspiring to me. She has said something to the effect that those who support injustice cannot be trusted to make the right decision. That's harder to perceive, like in terms of the priesthood issue, but it means that if I don't do anything, then I'm like someone who is supporting injustice. Ava believed that "people are more important than scientific truth alone." From the standpoint of humanism and Buddhism, this is really true.

Q: How do you plan to take what you have learned into the world when the play is over?

The ensemble members of the cast:

Sherry Finsand: To be even more flexible than I have been up until this point. To be a better listener. In everything that I've experienced with the other actors, I see what each person's special attribute is—and you get reminded that you're not just in a room with actors but other Buddhists.

When I go back into the dog-eat-dog world, I just hope that I can take what I've learned from each person even if it's only a little, only one small thing, that I can use to be a broader human being....

I realize that it's possible to create what we have here [in rehearsals] out there, with strangers. They have the same potential. It's a reminder of how great it can be all the time.

Jessica Ann Bogart: Participating in this play has made me see that being present and doing what you do every day is part of world peace. What I'm learning here I will take with me into other activities —like my life. For one, I'm a huge advocate of vitamin C [laughs]. I've learned the importance of taking responsibility for yourself, for your actions, the way the Paulings did. This play allows people to learn about Linus and Ava Pauling's work and leave with some insight.

Brian McKenzie: Put more ambition into what I do — in everything that I do. It makes you really look at people. I want to be sure that my efforts are toward that goal....

Julie Arden (*the youngest member of the ensemble, age 14*): I enjoyed meeting everyone and seeing so many points of view. I think I understand more about peace — that it is something that we have to fight for. That people had to fight for what they believed and that we've come a long way. I learned that a relationship can mean more than just love, it can be more like friendship, having a companion who supports who you truly are — that's a lot more than what romance might appear to be on the outside. I'm almost 15 and a relationship like the Paulings had is inspiring to me.

Title: The Essential Bond "Play Pays Homage To A Great Love"

Subject: World Tribune 06/25/99 n.3248 p.9 WT990625p09

Author:

Keywords: Bond Essential Experiences Great Homage Love Pays Play Youth

President Ikeda, in speaking about relationships, makes the following comments:

“A healthy relationship is one in which two people encourage each other to reach their respective goals while sharing each other’s hopes and dreams. A relationship should be a source of inspiration, invigoration and hope” (*Discussions on Youth*, vol. 1, p. 116).

The Essential Bond manages to capture the heart of this truth. It shows us how a great love between two people can have a broad, far-reaching effect, creating value for many.

Title: The Essential Bond "Play Pays Homage To A Great Love"
Subject: World Tribune 06/25/99 n.3248 p.9 WT990625p09
Author:
Keywords: Bond Essential Experiences Great Homage Love Pays Play Youth